

Frequently Asked Questions -- Corps Limited Review of Projects

1. Why did the Corps of Engineers stop these projects?

We are pausing-not stopping. This review is limited to projects that have already been authorized but on which construction has not begun. There is often a lapse of time between the preparation and approval of the final planning documents and the beginning of construction. Conditions can change, and it is important to have confidence that these projects are sound investments. Pauses may be very brief for some projects, longer for others, depending on individual circumstances.

2. How many projects are involved?

The actual projects are being identified at the field level. While initial estimates were that approximately 150 projects were involved, when the specific screening criteria is applied at the field level the number is expected to be substantially less.

3. How much will this review cost?

Projects already under construction will not be affected so there are no contract termination fees. Costs to update analysis or documentation should be minimal except where conditions have changed significantly.

4. Why aren't all Corps projects going through this review?

Corps projects that are still in the study phase will be reviewed under the normal process of feasibility report completion.

5. Is this a change in Corps policy?

Our regulations require that the economics be updated within five years prior to beginning construction. In the past there has been no requirement to assess the documentation of Corps projects proceeding to construction.

6. When did the pause start and how long will the pause last?

Districts are starting Tuesday, April 30, to do the review. How long the pause lasts will depend on the individual project and the requirements of that regional commander. Some projects will have a quick check to see when the last economic reanalysis was done, and if it's current, will proceed. Others may require more extensive work on the economics or other documentation.

7. Is this a result of recent announcement about the suspension of the Delaware River project?

Not directly, however, a number of recent evaluations of Corps studies and projects have highlighted the importance of ensuring that economic evaluations and other documentation are current.

8. Were you directed to do this pause?

No, but I will tell you that when we told our cost sharing sponsors, other federal agencies and elected officials they wanted us to do what we needed to do to ensure sound investment advice.

9. Is this in response to newspaper articles or the close scrutiny of interest groups?

We welcome scrutiny of our work and even more than that we want these folks at the table helping us solve the problem we are confronted with. We all have a stake in sound government and accountability and that's what this is all about.

10. Are there more projects like the Upper Mississippi, the Delaware River and the Columbia?

Lumping all of these projects together muddies the water because they were at different stages, but the common thread is that they are all trying to solve problems.

11. What's going on with the Delaware River study?

We received a preliminary brief from the GAO folks last week. They raised a number of valid questions. We want to answer those questions over the next several weeks. The details of the report cannot be released at this time. We expect a final report the end of May or early June.

12. What about the Upper Mississippi?

We are very satisfied with the way the study has been realigned. We have a Washington level federal principals group providing national policy perspective and oversight. The Restructured study will develop a comprehensive plan that will look more holistically at the complicated interrelationship between the environment, navigation system and floodplain. We want to ensure that the waterway continues as a nationally treasured ecological resource as well as an effective transportation system.

13. Comments on Columbia River deepening:

The Northwestern Division commander is currently conducting an independent technical review of that project and his action is ongoing.

14. What will happen if your review and fresh look comes up with a project that has considerable changes in conditions?

The Division Commander will make a determination of the next steps based on what kind of additional analysis is needed. If there are significant changes, there may be a need to re-evaluate portions of the documentation, but again that is on a case-by-case basis.

15. What happens if your reanalysis comes up with a project that is no longer economically feasible?

A: We will address these on a case-by-case basis. There is a process to put this information back in front of the decision makers.